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**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

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**WEST CECIL HEALTH CENTER RECEIVES GRANT FROM MARYLAND COMMUNITY HEALTH RESOURCES COMMISSION TO EXPAND DENTAL SERVICES IN PERRYVILLE**

**(Conowingo, MD)** - West Cecil Health Center (WCHC) was recently awarded grant funding from the Maryland Community Health Resources Commission (CHRC) totaling \$325,000 to expand access to dental care. Access to oral health care is a significant gap in health care for the central Maryland Upper Bay region. WCHC is the area's only non-profit Federally Qualified Health Center (FQHC) and currently runs a 4-chair dental clinic that has received incredible demand for affordable dental health services. Noting the robust demand, and the shortage of providers in the area, WCHC leadership sought to collaborate with community partners to expand its dental services to better serve area residents. In partnership with the University of Maryland Dental School in Perryville, Union Hospital, and the CHRC, WCHC will be opening a new location scheduled for July 2017. This new site will be dedicated to increasing access to dental services and serving as a dental home for thousands of residents that before only had access to episodic urgent care. "Union Hospital of Cecil County is very committed to expanding dental care services in our community and looking forward to working with West Cecil and the University of Maryland Dental School to provide high quality health care now and into the future," explained Laurie Beyer, Sr. VP Finance/CFO, Union Hospital. The new dental clinic will serve all residents regardless of insurance status, age, or income; provide services on a sliding fee; expand service hours to include evening and weekend hours; and function as a dental home, creating accessible affordable care available for all family members.

The grant to support the new center in Perryville is one of three grants, totaling more than \$1 million that the CHRC has awarded to WCHC in recent years. These grants have served as a tremendous asset in assisting WCHC to expand access to the underserved in Cecil and Harford Counties. A grant in 2011 supported West Cecil's new behavioral health program, and another grant in 2014 supported West Cecil's opening of the Beacon Health Center in Havre de Grace, the first FQHC in Harford County.

The CHRC's Request for Proposals generated 77 proposals requesting \$48.9 million. The CHRC awarded 17 grants totaling \$4 million. The 17 projects are estimated to serve more than 21,000 Marylanders, with dental care as one of five areas of focus this year. The CHRC has awarded 35 grants totaling \$7 million to increase access to dental services. These programs have collectively served more than 52,000 Marylanders in urban, suburban, and rural areas of the state.

"The Commission congratulates West Cecil for developing such an important project that will expand access to dental services in Perryville," commented Mark Luckner, Executive Director, Maryland Community Health Resources Commission. "This project is a great public-private partnership among West Cecil, the University of Maryland Dental School, and Union Hospital."

"West Cecil Health Center is excited about the opportunities this expansion will bring to our current and future patients. This would not have been possible without the support of the CHRC, Union Hospital, University of Maryland, and the members of our community" explained John Ness, Interim CEO, West Cecil Health Center. "Being able to provide this access to dental services helps us get another step closer to providing affordable access to health to every member of our community."